

Executive Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, 29 March 2022 (13:30 – 16:45 CEST)

Zoom / Radisson Collection Hotel, Grand Place Brussels (Hybrid)

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Vice-Chair, Sean O'Donoghue

Click [here](#) to access the Chair's presentation.

Taking into account the unavailability of Guus Pastoor, MAC Chair, members agreed that the meeting would be chaired by Sean O'Donoghue, MAC Vice-Chair.

Adoption of draft agenda and of the last meeting minutes (26.01.22): adopted

Action points of the last meeting

- **State-of-play of the decision made during the last meeting - information**
- United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021:
 - Maintain cooperation and sharing of information with FAO
 - Ongoing
- Functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy and of the Common Market Organisation:
 - Extraordinary meetings of the Working Groups to take place in February 2022, in order to prepare advice
 - Extraordinary WG1 & WG3 meetings on 4 & 10 February 2022
- Performance Review:
 - Presentation and exchange of views on the final report to take place at the next meeting
 - Agenda item scheduled (15:15 CEST)
- Inter-Advisory Councils' Coordination:
 - Secretariat to coordinate with the Secretariats of other Advisory Councils to prepare a joint letter to the Commission on the weight of advice in public consultations
 - Letter sent to DG MARE on 4 March 2022
 - Reply received on 16 March 2022

The Chair suggested, in relation to the ongoing cooperation with the FAO, for regular exchanges to be established, for example once per year, while accounting for the timing of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting in September.



Farm to Fork Strategy

- **Exchange of views on initiatives with an impact on the market of fishery and aquaculture products with MEP Pierre Karleskind, Chair of Committee on Fisheries, European Parliament**

Due to an expected change in schedule, MEP Pierre Karleskind was not available to participate.

The Chair informed that Mr Karleskind was not available to participate in the meeting, but highlighted the opportunity to better prepare for a future exchange of views.

The Secretary General informed that the Secretariat was contacted by Mr Karleskind's office. The office expressed interest in knowing more about the initiatives that will be affecting the market of fishery and aquaculture products in the future, particularly those affecting labelling and consumer information. The initiatives are currently under development by the Commission. The office is looking for information on the coherence of policy initiatives, stakeholders' views, and different effects. A meeting between the Secretary General and Ms Fanny Devaux, Accredited Parliamentary Assistant, took place, in which the Secretary General provided an overview of the MAC's work, adopted advice, and ongoing topics of work. It was agreed that Mr Karleskind would participate at the next meeting of the Executive Committee, in order to share his views and exchange with the members.

The participation was not possible, but Mr Karleskind expressed willingness to participate in the May 2022 meeting. The Secretary General provided an overview of the initiatives for potential discussion, including the sustainable food system framework, the revision of the marketing standards framework, the revision of the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers, the initiative on substantiating green claims, the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCR) for Marine Fish products, the EU Taxonomy Regulation, the revision of the animal welfare legislation, and the initiative to empower the consumer for the green transition.

The Chair suggested, in order to achieve a structured discussion at the May meeting, that the Secretariat could prepare a paper summarising the relevant initiatives and highlighting the key recommendations.

Jennifer Reeves (MSC) wanted to know if the PEFCR initiative would be part of the exchange of views. Ms Reeves informed that, in January 2022, she discussed the topic with the Mr Karleskind's office and shared the positions of her organisation. The office expressed significant interest in the topic, demonstrating the relevance of the MAC officially adopting advice on the topic.

The Secretary General explained that Mr Karleskind's office had been informed that the MAC was working on the topic and that a discussion would be taking place at the March 2022 meeting, but that no document was circulated, since there were no approved documents. Once there is approved advice on the PEFCR, the Secretariat could circulate it. The previous advice on substantiating green claims was circulated.

The Chair recognised that the views on the PEFCR initiative could have significant relevance for Mr Karleskind's office. Therefore, it should be included in the paper.



Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) agreed that it was important to present the MAC's work to MEPs. Taking into account the division of competences between Committees in the European Parliament, Mr Guillaumie suggested that, on PEFCR, it would be more appropriate to exchange with the Chair of the ENVI Committee, instead of the Chair of the PECH Committee. Therefore, the MAC should invite both MEPs for exchanges of views.

The Chair agreed that the exchange of views with Mr Karleskind should focus on the areas of responsibility of the PECH Committee. The Chair also agreed that an invitation could be sent to the Chair of the ENVI Committee to discuss topics under their competence, such as the PEF method.

The Secretary General stated that the request for a meeting came from Mr Karleskind's office, so the Secretariat would maintain contact to determine the topics of interest for them. The Secretary General committed to contacting the office of Mr Canfin, Chair of the ENVI Committee, to determine their interest in an exchange of views.

Working Groups

- **Reporting by Sean O'Donoghue, Chair of Working Group 1**

The Chair proposed the adoption of the draft advice on the functioning of the CMO Regulation. The Chair recalled that, at Working Group 1 and Working Group 3's level, three different versions of the draft were circulated previously. On 25 March, via written procedure, the Working Groups reached agreement on the draft.

The Executive Committee approved the draft advice on the functioning of the CMO Regulation.

The Chair informed that, at the 28 March 2022 meeting, Working Group 1 considered a draft on the 2021 implementation of the landing obligation. Taking into account some pending redrafting, the document would be circulated via urgent written procedure before being put forward to the Executive Committee for adoption at a later stage.

The Chair further informed that Working Group 1 addressed several issues related to EUMOFA, which will be on the agenda of the next meeting. Working Group 1 agreed that, concerning brown crab, trade-related issues would be addressed by Working Group 2, plus that the MAC would ask for observer status at the new NWWAC-NSAC Focus Group. The Production and Marketing Plans were discussed, and a way forward was determined, in order to prepare a revision of the Guidelines and Good Practices document. There was also agreement on the topics to put forward at the STECF meeting on the Annual Economic Report of the EU Fishing Fleet, which will take place in June 2022.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) suggested that, for the next STECF meeting on the economic report on the EU Aquaculture sector, which will take place in 2023, the MAC should request observer status and nominate a representative.

The Chair agreed with the suggestion. The Chair commented that an aquaculture representative, such as Mr Guillaumie, could be an appropriate representative.



Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) informed that he would already be participating in the meeting as an invited expert. Therefore, he would not be able to represent the MAC. Mr Guillaumie mentioned Mr Javier Ojeda (FEAP) as a potential adequate representative.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) agreed with the suggestion to request observer status in the meeting, but that added that it was not necessary to select a representative right away.

- **Reporting by Pierre Commère, Chair of Working Group 2**

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) proposed the adoption of the draft advice on trade policy instruments and impact on the EU market for fishery and aquaculture products – improvement of data. Working Group 2 analysed the report on the topic adopted by the Initial Focus Group on Trade. At the 28 March 2022 meeting, Working Group 2 considered the draft advice and, following minor amendments, reached agreement on the text. Working Group 2 also agreed that new Terms of Reference would be adopted, in order to establish a new Focus Group on Trade.

The Executive Committee approved the draft advice on trade policy instruments and impact on the EU market for fishery and aquaculture products – improvement of data.

Mr Commère informed that, at the 28 March meeting, DG MARE provided an update on the IUU carding system. Working Group 2 was informed about the initiative on the application of EU health and environmental standards to imported agricultural and agri-food products, which will not cover fishery and aquaculture products. Regarding the export of brown crab to the People's Republic of China, Mr Visser committed to prepare a document outlining problems concerning the recognition of health certificates. DG MARE presented the initiative on the EU Taxonomy Regulation. Members are not entirely familiar with the initiative, so the MSC committed to sharing their position on the topic. Once there is an exchange of views with DG FISMA, the Working Group will likely develop a draft advice. At the meeting, members also had the opportunity to exchange with Mr Frangiscos Nikolian about the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including on measures to face the crisis.

- **Reporting by Benoît Thomassen, Chair of Working Group 3**

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) informed that the 29 March 2022 meeting started with a consideration of draft advice on maximum sulphite levels in crustaceans. There was agreement to include an additional paragraph to the text, so the draft advice will be circulated via written procedure. Mr Thomassen proposed the adoption of the draft advice on the public consultation on the revision of the EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers.

The Executive Committee approved the draft advice on the public consultation on the revision of the EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers.

Mr Thomassen proposed the adoption of the draft advice on the revision of EU legislation on animal welfare.

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) wanted to understand the meaning of “fill-in the gaps with sound knowledge” in draft recommendation e).



Javier Ojeda (FEAP) stated that it referred to knowledge gaps, particularly missing information. The aim would be to have scientific studies to provide the necessary knowledge to achieve a full understanding of the wellbeing of fish.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) expressed agreement with Mr Ojeda, emphasising that it is not about improving knowledge, but actually a lack of knowledge concerning the wellbeing of fish. In many cases, animal welfare is seen from an ethical and philosophical perspective. Since there is an absence of scientific knowledge, it is difficult to put actions in place.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed satisfaction with the wording of the first half of draft recommendation e), while adding that the second half could be clearer. There is insufficient knowledge available to make informed decisions on animal welfare. Mr Ojeda suggested to redraft the recommendation to read: “Undertake further scientific studies to gain enough knowledge to understand fish welfare for assuring best practice at farm level; and communications to analyse the link between better animal welfare standards and production return for fish farmers as well as the positive impact on food safety and food security”.

The Executive Committee approved the amended draft advice on the revision of EU legislation on animal welfare.

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) proposed the adoption of the draft advice on EU-level targets for food waste reduction, which was agreed earlier by Working Group 3.

The Secretary General informed that FEDEPESCA requested the removal of their minority position in relation to the policy options for expressing food waste.

The Executive Committee approved the draft advice on EU-level targets for food waste reduction.

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) informed that, at the 29 March meeting, the Secretary General provided an update on the work of the Focus Group on PEFCR for Marine Fish Products. The Working Group agreed to a division of the draft advice into two documents. A draft advice, based on the agreed political messages, is to be circulated to the Working Group through written procedure. As for the technical aspects of the original draft, there would be an additional meeting of the Focus Group with the Technical Secretariat, in order to have the data to better understand the consequences of the PEF methodology. At the next meeting, it would be possible to proceed with another draft on the technical aspects.

Performance Review

- **Presentation of final report by Benoît Guerin, BG Sea Consulting**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Chair recalled that, at the previous meeting, the interim report was presented by Mr Guerin. The final report was circulated to the members on 22 March 2022.



Benoît Guerin (BG Sea Consulting) highlighted the significant amount of activities undertaken by the MAC. Concerning sources of information, there were qualitative interviews with active members, DG MARE, Member State officials (Croatia, Spain, Ireland), MEPs or their assistants, AC Secretariats, and market's experts. There was observance and attendance of meetings, including those of September 2021, January 2022, and meetings of the Focus Group on PEFCR. An online questionnaire was circulated to all members and to AC Secretariats. There was also a selection of pieces of advice corresponding to the 2019-2022 period. Mr Guerin stated that the MAC was well structured, since the Working Groups cover the main topics throughout the entire supply chain.

Mr Guerin provided an overview of the results on the MAC's internal functioning. On participation in meetings, members participate more to receive up to date information from the Commission than to participate in the drafting of advice. On representation of interests, the MAC covers the entire supply chain, but there are some unbalances in the membership. Producers represent a very significant part of the membership. The participation of consumer associations is missing, despite attempts from the Secretariat. On running of meetings, there are efficient working procedures and a professional work environment. At the same time, there is a lack of sense of ownership. On the drafting process, there is transparency and significant effort in finding the right tone and wording based on the members' contributions. Some members believe that the search for consensus provides an added value, while the majority believe that it is watering down their opinions. On the quality of the opinions, there is general satisfaction and members believe that the MAC has an impact on the decision-making process, even though it is impossible to measure.

Mr Guerin provided an overview of the results on advice. The MAC committed to follow a large number of EU legislative initiatives and to deliver advice. 21 pieces of advice were delivered per year. The topics in the Work Programme are increasing from year to year, particularly connected to the Farm to Fork Strategy. In terms of transparency, it could be useful to know the author of the advice and of the contributions. It is quite difficult for the ACs to keep track of the recommendations, particularly in the context of the decision-making process, even though there are efforts from the MAC to follow-up on the action points of the previous meetings. As for contribution to the Common Fisheries Policy, the MAC contributed to an efficient and transparent market, while moderately contributing to achieving economic, social, employment benefits, use of unwanted catches, conditions for an economic and viable industry, and for the interests of both producers and consumers.

Mr Guerin provided an overview of the cooperation practices. The cooperation with the Commission is quite positive. Commission officials expressed interest in the MAC acting more as a "reality check" and to identify on the field problems with the EU regulations as well as to propose practical solutions. Member States are interested in the advice, but cooperation is limited. In the past mandate, the European Parliament did not address market issues. There is regular cooperation with the LDAC and the AAC on matters of joint interest. More cooperation could be achieved with other parties, such as non-EU, experts, and other food sectors.

Mr Guerin provided an overview of the results on communication and public relations. The MAC is producing good quality advice, which could be presented in a wider setting, such as events. More could be done, in terms of communication to the wider public. The MAC could present "stories" to



the wider public, in order to “build a brand”, for example highlighting collaboration with the supply chain.

As for final reflections, Mr Guerin highlighted that the work of the MAC is very dependent on the capacity of the Secretary General. On the deliverance of advice, the recommendations can be quite general, which allows the Commission to avoid providing specific responses. The Commission’s replies sometimes miss the rationale. Recommendations should follow the “SMART approach”. The narrowing of the scope of the MAC’s contributions could be considered, even though it is also a matter for the Commission to consider in the context of multiple initiatives under development that affect the market of fishery and aquaculture products. The MAC could adopt a more strategic approach. There could be own initiatives outside EU regulations, a focus on level-playing field, the role of the seafood market as a food sector, and the market’s sustainability criteria. Besides the development of advice, there can be additional added value from the gathering of the entire supply chain, such as partnerships with scientific projects, and invitation of experts. There is a strong network of information and knowledge in the MAC. There is always a balance in the Advisory Councils between providing political advice and providing technical advice, while the MAC could benefit from more technical advice.

Mr Guerin provided an overview of the proposed actions. The recommendations should be adopted following the “SMART” approach. There should be more structure in the relationship between the Advisory Councils and the Commission, including a template for Advisory Council’s advice and Commission’s replies, which would justify the inclusion or rejection of the recommendations. As an example, in the Commission’s reply to the advice on suggested EUMOFA case studies, it is clearly stated why the suggested studies were approved or rejected. The MAC should adopt a more strategic approach, including through the adoption of advice on topics outside the Commission’s consultations. The MAC should develop own initiatives, for example through the organisation of events or thematic workshops covering the whole supply chain. More time could be dedicated to understanding the functioning of the market. The MAC should look for long-standing partnerships with seafood experts and scientists, as to strengthen the work and analyses.

- **Exchange of views**

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) expressed agreement with the suggestions of following a “SMART” approach in the recommendations and of a clearer format to follow the recommendations and the Commission’s replies. Besides the Commission, it would be useful to know how the advice is being considered by the Member States. Mr Guillaumie agreed that a more strategic approach is needed. There should be a vision and a strategic plan, including through the development of internal initiatives and external collaborations. Concerning the participation in scientific projects, it is important to account for the financial implications and the competence. The organisation of events would require additional personnel in the Secretariat. Unless the Commission develops a specific mechanism, there is insufficient financial capacity to advance with additional events and scientific projects.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed opposition to the suggestion of identifying the author and contributors of the specific pieces of advice. Advice is adopted by the MAC, so it should not identify specific persons. Only dissenting opinions should be recorded, if requested. The description of the



involvement of the Working Group Chair or of specific experts would not be relevant either. In terms of audience of the advice, Mr Ojeda emphasised that the Members and the Commission are the only recipients of the advice. Therefore, Member States should be seen as recipients, not as partners. Regarding potential new objectives of the MAC, he underscored that the reason of existence of the Advisory Councils is to provide advice to the Commission and to the Member States. The MAC can also have a role as a multi-stakeholder “think tank” to share knowledge and opinions, which can serve to improve the recommendations.

Mr Ojeda expressed scepticism about potential partnerships with research projects. The functioning procedures applicable to the Advisory Councils make it difficult to participate in external debates. MAC representatives cannot provide their personal opinions. Since there should be consensual positions, there must be previous discussion among members and agreement. The MAC should maintain the current focus, unless there are specific selected actions. Despite these difficulties, the decision-making procedures are positive, since these ensure transparency and fairness.

Jean-Marie Robert (Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne) highlighted the relevance of the development of advice on topics beyond EU regulations, which could have significant added value, even though the members and the Secretariat spend significant time on the development of advice concerning the Commission’s initiatives and consultations. Mr Robert provided examples of potential topics, such as species with insufficient valorisation in exports, or the significant decrease in sales felt in the second half of January in the French market. The identification of these situations could be beneficial to all participants.

Pim Visser (VisNed) asked for clarification on whether, when developing advice, the MAC should focus on technical or political aspects. In relation to a template, Mr Visser stated that it would be positive for the Commission to be obliged identify their agreement and disagreement with the recommendations. At the same, the provision of a template summarizing the advice could mean that the Commission focuses on that summary, ignoring important points in the advice.

The Chair stated that the report expressed positive results on the performance and functioning of the MAC. The Chair shared some of the concerns mentioned by Mr Ojeda. The MAC must follow the legal requirements foreseen in the Common Fisheries Policy. In previous occasions, the Commission reminded the MAC about the appropriate recipients of advice. Taking into account the dependency on the role of the Secretary General, the Chair suggested the development of a contingency plan in case of unforeseen unavailability. Therefore, at the next meeting, a “succession planning” should be discussed. The Chair added that, in his view, the MAC was gradually developing a “SMART” approach.

In relation to own initiatives, the MAC had been developing a few, but, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became primarily focused on legislative initiatives. Nevertheless, there was the initiative on trade policy instruments. As a prior example, the MAC organised a workshop on plastics in the seafood supply chain. In some cases, such as the workshop on voluntary sustainability claims, the Commission expressed reservations about the initiatives, since these were outside their current topics of activity.



Benoît Guerin (BG Sea Consulting) emphasised the relevance of a strategic approach by the MAC, for example through the development of a multiannual work programme, since there are several topics that are maintained from one operational year to another. Concerning Mr Ojeda's intervention, Mr Guerin agreed that the first mission of the Advisory Councils is to provide advice and that the second mission is to share knowledge and act as a "think tank". Taking into account the participation of the entire supply chain, the MAC should consider the functioning of the market, as exemplified by Mr Robert. Concerning Mr Visser's question, Mr Guerin responded that the MAC should focus more on the technical aspects, since there is significant expertise amongst the membership.

Mr Guerin highlighted that the MAC is functioning very well. Several participants emphasised that, in the past years, the MAC improved significantly. The recommendations of the report also take into account the views of the Commission. Therefore, it could be useful for the MAC to further discuss these with Commission representatives. The development of a template should not "water down" the opinions, but could provide a way to oblige the Commission to clarify why certain recommendations are accepted or not. In some replies, the Commission avoids responding directly to the recommendation, instead focusing on procedural aspects of the initiatives.

The Chair thanked Mr Guerin for the useful and detailed report, adding that several of the recommendations would likely be implemented. A strategic multiannual perspective would be particularly relevant for the MAC, while maintaining cooperation with the Commission. At the same time, it is important to maintain some flexibility, as was the case for the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Chair suggested that, at the next meeting, the Executive Committee should discuss a contingency plan in case of unavailability of the Secretary General. In relation to a multiannual strategic approach, the Chair suggested that each Working Group could discuss topics of relevance.

Pim Visser (VisNed) emphasised that, based on the report's recommendation, the Executive Committee must decide on the actions to take. Mr Visser suggested for the Secretariat to prepare a short document outlining the main conclusions and recommendations of the report as well as comments from the members. At the next meeting, members could reflect and provide additional suggestions.

The Chair agreed with Mr Visser's suggestion.

Inter-Advisory Councils' Coordination

- **Reporting back by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General, on the following meetings:**
 - **Inter-Secretariats (25 February 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that, on 25 February 2022, the Financial Officer and himself attended an Inter-Secretariats meeting organised by DG MARE. The aim of the meeting was to discuss administrative and financial matters. The planning of meetings, the lump-sum approach, and the new delegated act on the functioning of the Advisory Councils were discussed. Under the current financial



procedure, each Advisory Council annually submits an application to receive financial support from the European Commission. The amount is the same for all Advisory Councils. At the end of the operational year, the Advisory Councils adopt a final report, which reports on the implementation of the work programme and on the implementation of the budget. The Commission can refuse to cover certain expenses that are deemed to not be reimbursable.

Under the lump-sum approach, each Advisory Council will prepare an estimation of their annual budget. The Advisory Councils will need to report on the implementation of the deliverables under the work programme. If half of the deliverables have been met, the Commission will provide financial support, but the expenditure will not be checked. The Advisory Councils will also be able to keep any unspent money. DG MARE will take account the historical expenses of each Advisory Council, which will translate into different amounts of financial support for each Advisory Council.

At the 25 February meeting, DG MARE informed that Director-General Vitcheva was considering the approval of the lump-sum approach. DG MARE was considering taking a multiannual approach when determining the appropriate amount per Advisory Council, but has decided to maintain an annual approach. DG MARE strongly encouraged the Advisory Councils to, when developing their budget proposals, demonstrate a 20% reduction in travel and meeting costs. In line with the European Green Deal objectives, hybrid meetings were also encouraged. There will be meetings with each Advisory Council to discuss their expenditure. Once the amount is agreed on, the Advisory Councils can amend their budgets, including to move expenditure across budget lines.

On 16 February 2022, the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/204 amending the delegated Regulation laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils was adopted. The Delegated Regulation has entered into force.

Christine Absil (Good Fish), in relation to the DG MARE's encouragement for the Advisory Councils to organise hybrid meetings, wanted to know if the Secretariat had been discussing with other Secretariats about the planning of meetings. Ms Absil suggested that the Executive Committee should discuss the preferred method to organise meetings (i.e., in person, online, hybrid). The networking aspect is usually an important factor to determine attendance. The involved costs also need to be considered.

The Chair agreed with the relevance of Ms Absil's intervention. When organising hybrid meetings, there is a risk that a very reduced number of members will participate in person. The in-person interaction between members is indeed fundamental. The Chair suggested to, under the draft agenda of the next meeting, schedule a discussion on the future organisation of meetings. In other Advisory Councils, there were discussions to hold several meetings fully in person, while making accommodation for potential online participation from the Commission and other external experts.

- **CCRUP's Executive Committee and Working Groups (15-16 March 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that, following the Working Group 2's agreement to cooperate on IUU matters, on 15 and 16 March 2022, he attended the Working Group and Executive Committee meetings of the CCRUP. The CCRUP maintains interest in undertaking joint work on the topic of IUU.



Once CCRUP members start drafting text on the topic, MAC members will be able to jointly consider this and potentially adopt it.

- **LDAC's Working Groups (22-24 March 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that, on 23 March 2022, he attended a Working Group 5 (“Horizontal Issues”) meeting of the LDAC. The Secretary General highlighted several of the topics under discussion, which were also of relevance to the MAC, such as an update from DG MARE on the IUU carding system, the social dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy and labour issues linked to imports and trade, due diligence in the value chain, the Russian-Ukraine crisis, and cooperation with FAO. The LDAC has been working with FAO to identify initiatives for potential collaboration in 2022 as well as to prepare for the 35th meeting of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which will take place from 5 to 9 September 2022.

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) highlighted that there was significant overlap between the topics of the LDAC's Working Group 5 and the MAC's areas of activity, particularly those of Working Group 2. Mr Commère wondered if the issue had been addressed in Inter-Advisory Council meetings. There was a risk of adoption of advice by one Advisory Council that was not in line with advice from the other Advisory Council. In the case of his organisation, there was more time dedicated to the work of the MAC. It is important to take into account this overlap. As an example, DG MARE provided an update on the IUU carding system at the last meetings of Working Group 2 and of the LDAC's Working Group 5. In the case of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the LDAC could consider issues specific to the EU's long-distance fleet, but some caution was required on the overlapping.

The Chair agreed about the importance of the matter. The Advisory Councils should aim to avoid adopting conflicting advice. The Advisory Councils should also respect their areas of competence. The Chair suggested for the organisation of a meeting the Management Teams of the MAC and of the LDAC to solve the matter. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, market matters are of the competence of the MAC. At the same time, when there are topics of common interest, the Advisory Councils are expected to work together.

The Secretary General explained that the Secretariats maintain formal and informal dialogues between themselves, in order to update on ongoing work. Under a shared folder, the Secretariats shared their work programmes and provided a summary of work topics. The Secretary General recalled that he usually attends, as an observer, the meetings of the LDAC and of the AAC. The Secretariats of the LDAC and of the AAC usually attend the meetings of the MAC. Nevertheless, it is up to the members of each Advisory Council to determine the work topics. Therefore, it is important, when work programmes are being defined, for associations participating in several Advisory Councils to raise the issue of competence and overlapping, including for potential joint work.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) commented that the structure of the MAC tends to favour the participation of EU-level associations. Therefore, it was reasonable that regional or thematic Advisory Councils could develop differing advice on the same topic. The approach in the Advisory Councils should be bottom-up. In relation to the Inter-AC Brexit Forum, Mr Guillaumie drew attention to the relevance of Brexit for the mussels trade, adding that it could be potentially relevant for the AAC to participate.



The Chair stated that an eventual participation of the AAC in the Inter-AC Brexit Forum should not be a problem. The Chair suggested to proceed with the organisation of a meeting between the Management Teams of the MAC and of the LDAC.

- **Update on joint letter on weight of contributions in public consultations**

The Secretary General recalled, on 4 March 2022, MAC, CCRUP, LDAC, MEDAC, AAC, NSAC, NWWAC, PELAC, BLSAC, and CCSUD sent a joint letter to Director-General Vitcheva on the weight of contributions in public consultations. The involvement of the MAC was previously approved by the Executive Committee. The Commission provided a letter of reply on 16 March 2022. In the reply, DG MARE confirmed that there is flexibility in format and timeline. There is an added weight for contributions from Advisory Councils, especially when there is consensus. DG MARE remains available to maintain bilateral dialogues. DG MARE will be making efforts to make the Advisory Councils' recommendations more visible, for example in Staff Working Documents.

- **Update on joint letter on stakeholder engagement in Specialised Fisheries Committee**

The Secretary General recalled, on 10 February 2022, a meeting between MAC, LDAC, NSAC, NWWAC, and PELAC took place to discuss the impact of Brexit. Participants agreed that a letter should be prepared concerning stakeholder engagement in the Specialised Fisheries Committee. The letter was circulated, from 21 to 28 March 2022, to the Executive Committee for approval. No comments were received. Therefore, the PELAC Secretariat will be informed of the MAC's agreement with the letter. In order to formalise the exchanges between the five Advisory Councils, draft Terms of Reference were prepared. The Secretary General invited the Executive Committee to provide comments on the draft and to approve the Terms of Reference. The aim is to have a forum, the "Inter-AC Brexit Forum", where several representatives of each Advisory Council will attend and exchange information on how Brexit is being addressed in their respective Advisory Council. Any suggested actions will still need to respect the applicable rules of procedure, including approval by the Executive Committees.

The Executive Committee approved the Terms of Reference of the Inter-AC Brexit Forum.

- **Preparation of position for Inter-Advisory Councils meeting (31 March 2022)**

The Secretary General informed that the Inter-Advisory Council meeting scheduled for 31 March 2022 had been postponed to 29 April 2022. The agenda items were not yet known.

Work Programme of Year 6 (2021-2022)

- **Update on priorities and deliverables by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General provided an update on the priorities and deliverables of the Work Programme of Year 6 (2021-2022):

- Fisheries Control Regulation and CATCH IT System: Political developments are still pending;
- EMFAF funding priorities: Exchanges of views with Member States are taking place;



- Farm to Fork Strategy: Work undertaken on several initiatives (i.e., Sustainable Food Systems framework, revision of EU animal welfare legislation, corporate governance framework, revision of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation, EU School Scheme, EU-level targets for food waste reduction);
- Trade agreements and trade policy: Exchanges of views with the Commission have taken place, advice on EU-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement was adopted on 18 October 2021, and draft advice on trade data is under development;
- Marketing standards framework: advice on the incorporation of sustainability aspects was adopted on 15 October 2021;
- Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing and global governance: exchange of views with the Commission on the carding system took place at the March 2022 Working Group 2 meeting;
- European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA): Exchange of views with the Commission took place at the March 2022 Working Group 1 meeting;
- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs): Exchange of views with the Commission took place at the January 2022 Working Group 2 meeting and the publication of the evaluation and of the Staff Working Document are still pending;
- Food Information to Consumers: Draft advice concerning the Commission's public consultation was under development in Working Group 3;
- Technologies for the transmission of data in the supply chain: A webinar was organised on 2 December 2021 together with the NWWAC and the NSAC, and a webinar report was published on 18 January 2022;
- Landing Obligation: Draft advice under development in Working Group 1;
- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF): The Annual Economic Report of the Fishing Fleet was presented at the January 2022 Working Group 1 meeting, and the working group is drafting a position for attendance of the June 2022 STECF meeting as active observers;
- Sanitary and hygiene rules: Drafting of advice on sulphite levels in crustaceans is under development in Working Group 3;
- Substantiating green claims: The Focus Group on PEFCE for Marine Fish products was established and Working Group 3 is drafting advice on the topic;
- Empowering the consumer for the green transition: The latest update on the topic took place at September 2021 Working Group 3 meeting;
- Other work: Advice on the functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy and on the functioning of the Common Market Organisation was adopted.



The Chair thanked the Secretary General for the comprehensive update, highlighting the relevance of continued updates on the implementation of the Work Programme.

- **Update on the accounts by Panos Manias, Financial Officer**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Financial Officer provided an update on the financial implementation of Year 6 (2021-2022). Groups A (staff) and D (operating costs), the fixed costs groups, were progressing in line with the budget and no significant deviations were expected. The use of Group B (participation in meetings) was very reduced, since the March 2022 meetings were the first meetings of the operational year to not be fully remote. Taking into account the number of members avoiding travelling, the budgeted amount is not expected to be fully realised. The realised expenses in Group C (information and preparation of meetings) correspond to the organisation of the March 2022 meetings. The final costs are likely to be higher than originally budgeted, since the organisation of hybrid meetings requires hiring audio-visual partners. Nevertheless, the increased expenses under Group C should be compensated by the underspending in Group B. The expenditure in Group E (interpretation and translation) is in line with the budget. As for Group F (other contracts), the budget amount has almost been met, since the Executive Committee agreed to proceed with an update of the website. The increased costs of Group F will be covered by the underspending of Group B and from some unforeseen additional income.

In relation to income from members and from Member States, the Financial Officer explained that the level of income is similar to the previous two operational years, but that income was still missing from a few members. 51 members have paid their membership fee, but the remaining ones are expected to proceed with the payment until the end of the operational year. As for the Member States, Ireland provided a higher contribution than budgeted, in order to compensate for missing their contributions in the previous operational years.

AOB

None.



Summary of action points

- FAO:
 - Secretariat to contact FAO about participation in September 2022 meeting, in order to annually exchange views concerning COFI meetings
- Farm to Fork Strategy:
 - Secretariat to prepare paper summarising advice related to Farm to Fork Strategy initiatives, in order to prepare ahead of exchange of views with MEP Karleskind
 - At a later stage, Secretariat to contact MEP Canfin about a potential exchange of views concerning ENVI-related topics
- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF):
 - Participation as active observers at the meetings on the EU Aquaculture Sector Economic Report to be requested
- Performance Review:
 - Secretariat to prepare a paper summarising the conclusions and recommendations of the report, in order to prepare for a discussion on potential actions at the next meeting
 - Under the draft agenda of the next meeting, agenda item on the contingency plan in case of unavailability of the Secretary General to be scheduled
- Inter-Advisory Council's Cooperation:
 - Management Team to request a meeting with the LDAC's Management Team, in order to discuss competence and cooperation on topics of common interest
- Organisation of meetings:
 - Under the draft agenda of the next meeting, agenda item on the preferred method of organisation of meetings (i.e., in person, online, hybrid) to be included



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Alexandra Philippe	Market Advisory Council	Secretariat
Alexandre Rodríguez	Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC)	Observer
Antonia Leroy	WWF	Member
Benoît Guerin	BG Sea Consulting	Observer
Benoît Thomassen	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Carla Valeiras Álvarez	EuroCommerce	Member
Catherine Pons	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Cécile Fouquet	Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC)	Observer
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Daniel Voces	Europêche	Member
Daniel Weber	European Fishmeal	Member
Emiel Brouckaert	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Frangiscos Nikolian	European Commission	Expert
Georg Werner	Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	Member
Javier Ojeda	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
Jennifer Reeves	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Member
Jérôme Dorgelo	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Member
Joash Matthew	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Louis Lambrechts	WWF	Member
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA	Member
Noémie Jegou	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Panos Manias	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat



Representative	Organisation	Role
Katarina Sipic	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Pierre Commère	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member
Pim Visser	VisNed	Member
Quentin Marchais	ClientEarth	Member
Roberto Carlos Alonso	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche	Member
Sean O'Donoghue	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPPO)	Chair
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member

